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A study of the organization of counselor preparation programs, the scope of course offerings, and the standards for admission in terms of special requirements. Discusses findings in areas of student retention, methods and equipment used, field experience, internship, placement assistance, special certificates, follow-up procedures, and use of findings.

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A SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

- Kenneth W. Hylbert -

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INTRODUCTION

The survey and analysis of counselor education programs for the preparation of public school guidance counselors was largely motivated by a desire to determine to what extent such programs are meeting the standards set forth in the manual Counselor Preparation published by the National Vocational Guidance Association in 1949 which was prepared by a wide representation of leading authorities in the field, and by a desire to provide a means of exchanging certain information which might be of value to counselor educators generally.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem for the study may be stated in the form of a question as follows: What practices are currently followed in programs for the preparation of public school guidance counselors, and what are the implications for the improvement of such programs?

PROCEDURES

The study was conducted in six major phases which may be described briefly as follows:

1. A basic list of counselor training institutions was established by consulting previously published lists, by inquiries directed to state super visors of guidance services, and by contacting institutions directly.

2. As a service to participating institutions a packet of materials describing The Pennsylvania State University counselor preparation program was sent to each with a memorandum request for information about (a) academic organization and personnel counselor trainer staffs and (b) program content.

3. Findings resulting from the initial request for data were reported to the responding institutions for verification and extension of the data submitted.

4. A second request for data about counselor preparation programs was made in the form of a memorandum questionnaire covering twelve aspects of counselor preparation programs.

5. The findings resulting from phase 4 of the study were consolidated, reorganized, and returned to the counselor trainers participating in the survey for verification and extension of data.

6. A report on the findings of the study was made to the Professional Training, Licensing, and Certification Committee of the American Personnel and Guidance Association at its Chicago meeting of April 1, 1953. This report closely parallels the findings as shown in the section of this abstract which

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follows.

FINDINGS

Organization of Counselor Preparation Programs: 72% of the programs are offered in Departments of Education; 16% in the Department of Education and Psychology; 7% in the Department of Psychology; 2% in the Department of Educational Psychology; and 1% in the Guidance Department. Seventy per cent of the institutions offer the program only at the graduate level; 25% offer it at both the graduate and undergraduate levels; and 5% only at the undergraduate level.

Scope of Course Offerings: These data were determined by examining the course content as provided in outline form by the institutions and were classified in seven competency areas according to a pattern found frequently in the literature and as practiced in counselor preparation programs.

I. INTRODUCTORY COURSES (A workable philosophy of guidance and an understanding of principles and practices): 3% offer no course, 73% utilize a single course, 21% offer two courses, while 4% have three or more courses.

II. STATISTICS (The organization, statistical treatment, and practical interpretation of numerical recorded data regarding human beings and their needs): 21% did not report a course, 46% utilize a single course, 18% provide two courses, while 15% have three or more courses.

III. TESTING (The identification, measurement, and recording of signficant human characteristics): 14% did not report a course, 40% have a single course, 13% utilize two courses, and 33% offer three or more courses.

IV. COUNSELING INFORMATION (The collection, evaluations, and organization for use of all types of educational, occupational, and community information needed by individuals to make effective choices and adjustments): 14% offer no course, 48% utilize a single course, 22% provide two courses, while 15% reported three or more courses.

V. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES (An understanding of the individual and of his problems of learning, behavior, and adjustment): 15% did not report a course, 27% utilize one course, 20% offer two courses, while 38 % provide three or more courses.

VI. COUNSELING TECHNIQUES (Effective procedures for instructing and counseling people who need special aid with problems): 7% did not report a course, 15% offer a single course, 22% offer two courses, and 55% have three or more courses.

VII. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION (The organization, administration, and evaluation of counseling programs and services): 27% did not report a course in this area, 53% offer a single course, 15% utilize two courses, and 5% provide three or more courses.

Of the eighty five counselor-preparation programs analyzed as to course content it was found that fifty one have at least one course in each of the

seven areas. The problem of what and how much to include in the curricula for counselor preparation was reported by counselor trainers as being the most pressing problem faced by them at the present time.

Standards for Admission to Counselor-Preparation Programs in Terms of Special Requirements:

A. Experience. 13% require that students have had prior teaching experience, 3% require work experience other than teaching.

B. Academic background. 23% require an education major, 22% background in psychology, 12% testing, 7% training in sociology and economics, 5% statistics.

C. Professional purpose. 22% require demonstrated interest in the field.

D. Personal. 25% require demonstrated aptitude for counseling.

E. Scholastic. 18% report comprehensive examination, 10% use the Graduate Record Examination, 10% want evidence of superior scholastic ability, 4% use special tests.

The dissertation discussed findings in areas of:

A. Student Retention
B. Methods and Equipment Used
C. Field Experience
D. Internship
E. Placement Assistance
F. Special Certificates
G. Follow-up Procedures and Use of Findings

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

It is found that, as a matter of general practice, the counselor preparation program is under the jurisdiction of the Department (division, school, or college) of Education. This appears to be a result of the need for the same general philosophy and orientation in the preparation of public school counselors as is essential for others prepared to work in the public schools. The practical problems of certification also can be met more easily if students are trained in this department.

The counselor education program is offered, typically, at the graduate level. Many statements of counselor trainers indicated that this is desirable because of the need for students who are mature and who have had, if possible, related experiences not often found at the undergraduate level. Many counselor trainers expressed the opinion that the student should have had substantial prerequisite background in psychology, education, economics, and sociology. As a basis for admission of students to the couselor preparation program it was found that there is widespread belief that they should possess, in addition to the maturity and academic background just described, special aptitudes, abilities, and personality characteristics essential to effective counseling. A substantial number of counselor trainers believe that students should be eliminated from the program

at any point when it is found that, in any of these respects, it is unlikely they can meet desirable standards of performance as counselors following training.

Programs for the preparation of public school counselors are found to follow a rather definite pattern of broad competency areas which include philosophy and principles, statistics, testing, counselors' information, individual differences, counseling techniques, and program administration and evaluation. There was some evidence that counselor trainers would consider two years of graduate work in these areas as highly desirable.

A general belief in the desirability of a wide range of field experiences as a means of bridging the gap between theory and practice was in evidence.

Many counselor trainers apparently feel that they have a personal responsibility for the successful placement and follow-up of their graduates. They have indicated that the success of their programs can be measured largely by the degree to which they are able to secure employment for students appropriate to their preparation and personal characteristics. Many counselor trainers likewise subscribe to the idea that only through follow-up of graduates is it possible to modify programs to meet the changing needs of future graduates and of employers. The study includes comments on needed research.